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COMPOSITION AND COLOUR





The material for this booklet
has been prepared
for the Youth and Recreation Branch
by Pat Fairhead



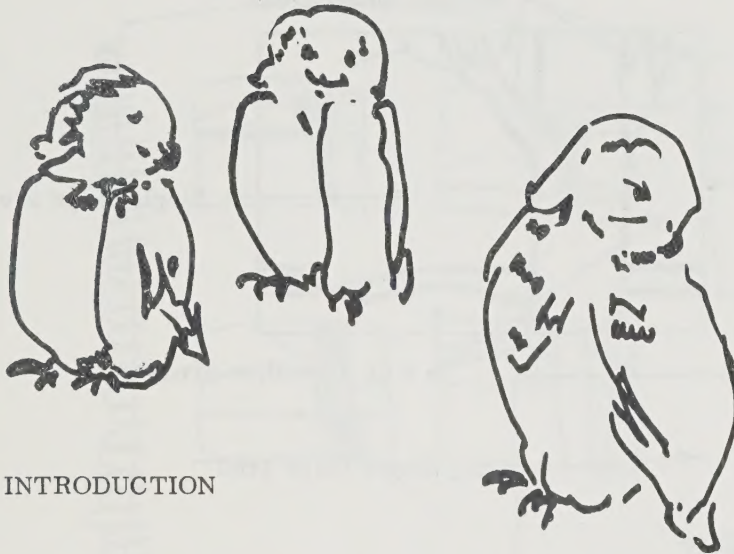
CONTENTS

	page
Introduction	1
Basic Elements of Composition..	2
Balance.....	9
Lines.....	12
Lines and Corners	15
Texture.....	19
Contrast	21
Centre of Interest.....	23
Munsell Colour Chart	33
Bibliography.....	39



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INTRODUCTION

What is composition and why is it important? There are many definitions and all kinds of theories on the subject. Perhaps some words of Frank Carmichael will have meaning for you: Composition is the deliberate ordering or planning of space, matter or activity for a given purpose.

This can be interpreted in several ways: in a traditional manner, a still life, landscape or portrait, is painted by deliberately planning all the parts of the composition to make the most of each. The subject can also be

abstract (real forms deliberately changed by the artist), or non-objective (meaning no object). The shapes could be totally imaginative. Regardless of content, the same principles of composition apply.

Why is this knowledge important? Over the years it has been supposed that when art in its various forms is used for recreational purposes only, basic knowledge of the subject is relatively unimportant. How can this be true? A beginner needs to know how to use color and composition for a satisfying experience just as much as a professional. Too many people, not all beginners, find the lack of this kind of knowledge can hold them back from personal achievement.

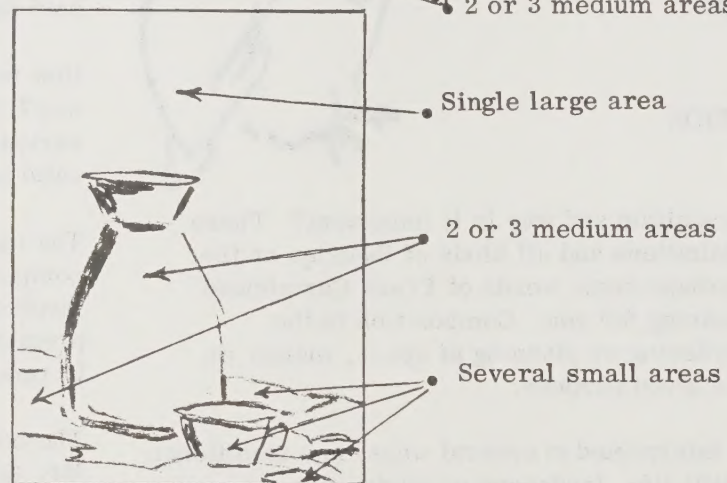
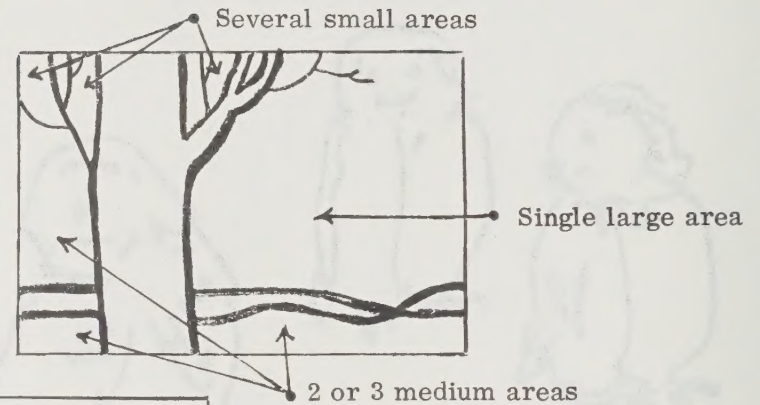
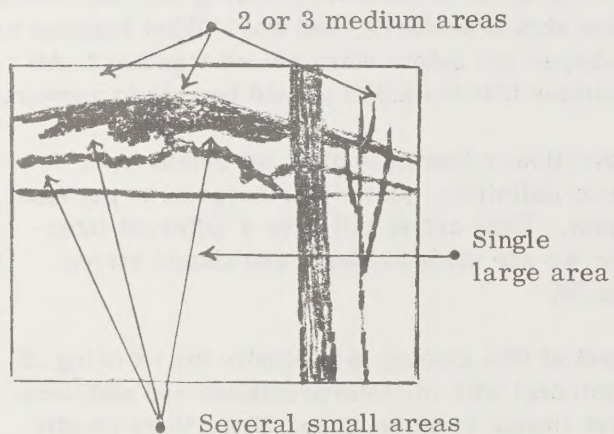
How to divide space in the most pleasing and interesting way? What should be where, and why? What happens to various shapes and colors when placed together? All valid questions that the artist should be able to answer.

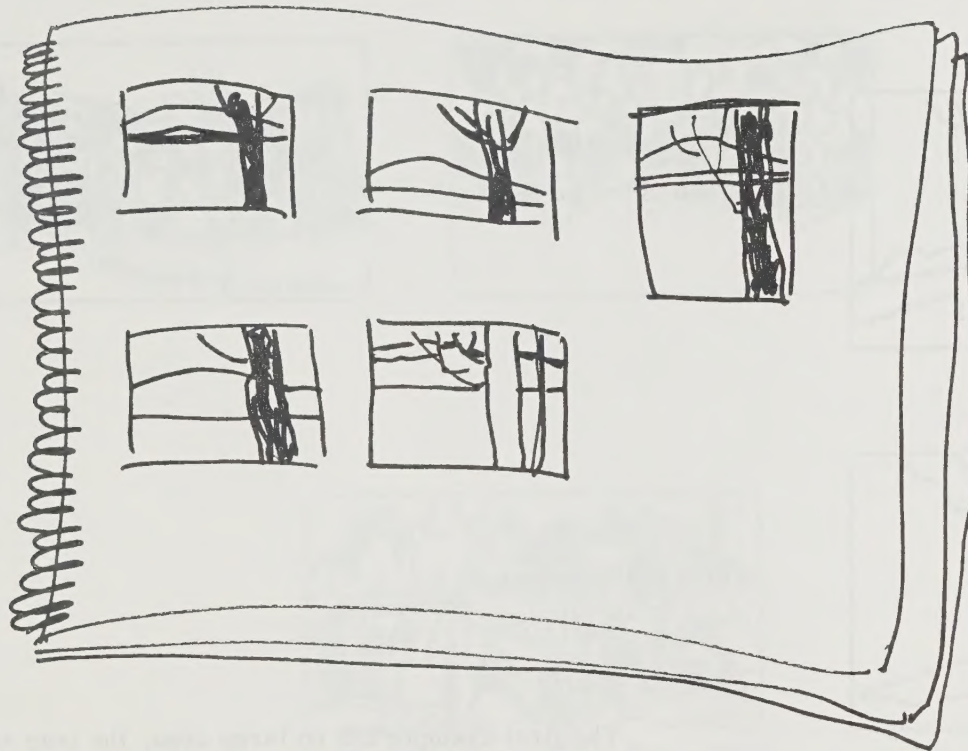
The information in this manual is not meant to be complete or definitive, just a starting point to personal involvement. Each artist will have a different interpretation: we are all individuals and should strive to remain so.

The content of this manual is basically the teaching of Mr. Carmichael with my interpretations and additions. My sincere thanks to his daughter Mrs. Mary Mastin for giving me the pleasure of looking through his notes, lesson plans and bits of personal philosophy on art.

LESSON ONE

The three basic elements of composition are: a single large area, two or three medium areas, and several small areas. This is a guide regardless of content (subject matter) and includes the whole surface to be worked on, not just the objects in the composition.



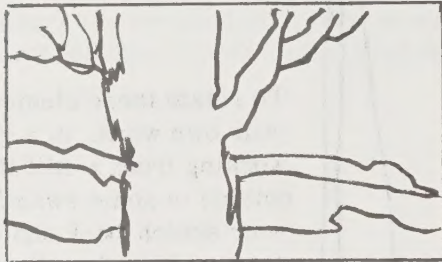


To relate these elements to your own work, in a class working from a still life or outside in some swamp, take your sketch book and draw three or four "small roughs" like this ...

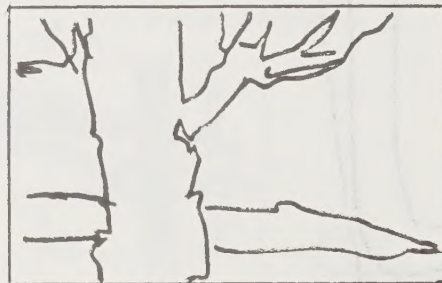
Give a good critical look and say to yourself, "find the 3 sizes of areas".

DEFINITION OF AREAS

How big is a large area in comparison to a medium one?



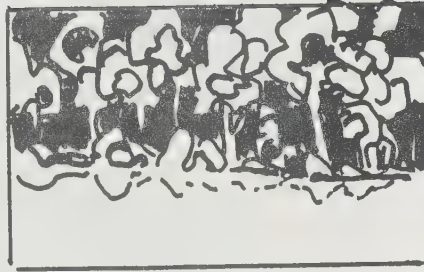
Which is the large area?



Which is the large area?

The first example has no large area, the tree and sky are equal in size. The second example is a better composition.

DEFINITION OF AREAS (cont'd)



The large area is patterned.

HOW ABOUT MEDIUM AREAS RELATED TO SMALL AREAS?



Which are the small areas?



Which are the small areas?

Be certain there is a noticeable difference!

This leads to an exception, all the areas are about the same size and the composition is an all-over pattern. Make a genuine effort to be original.



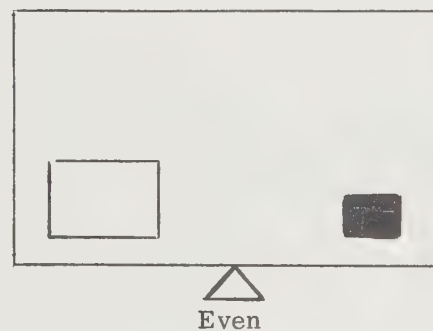
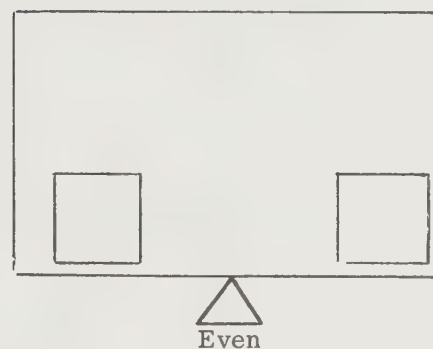
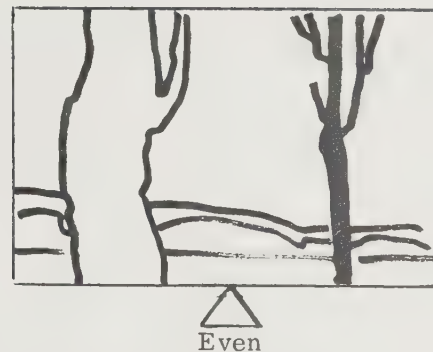
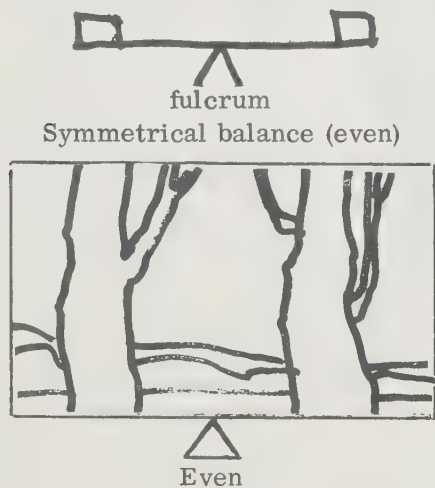
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BALANCE

Think in terms of a fulcrum on which a board is balanced by means of weights at the ends. There will be symmetrical or even balance when the fulcrum is in the centre and the weights are identical — un-symmetrical when the fulcrum is nearer one end and a heavier weight is on the short side.

Symmetrical balance is formal; un-symmetrical is informal but must look as balanced as formal. Look to see if the fulcrum will balance. If it appears to tip one way, adjust the weight. Work out your balance problems in the "small rough" stage...to discover the balance is off when your painting is almost finished is a real problem.

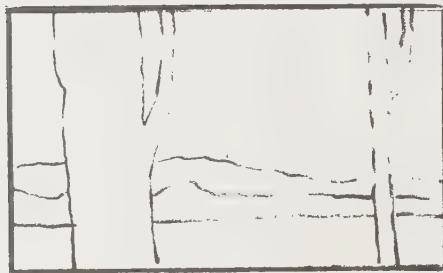


BALANCE (Continued)



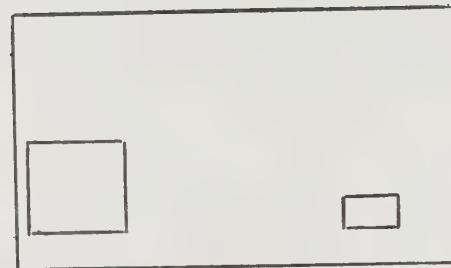
Fulcrum

Un-symmetrical Balance (un-even)

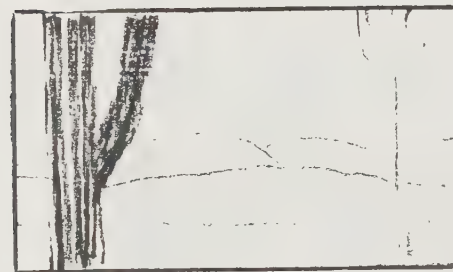


Un-even

Look to see if they balance

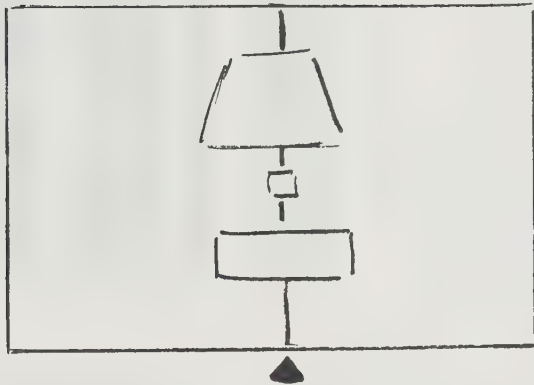


Un-even

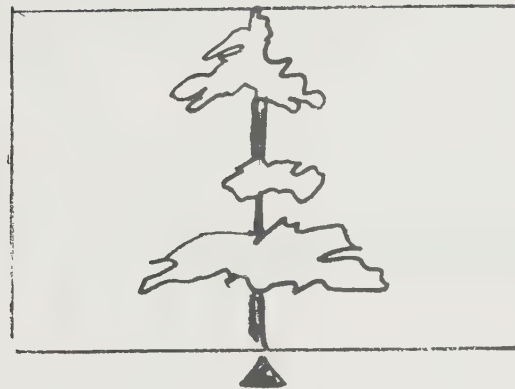


Un-even

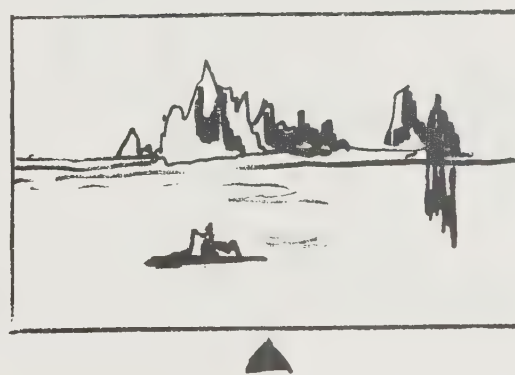
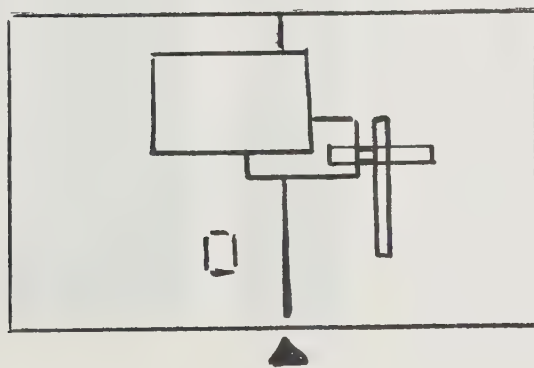
CENTRE BALANCE



Symmetrical - formal - even

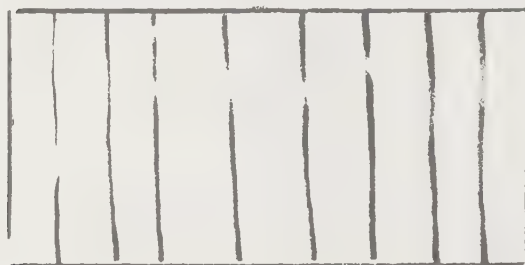


Un-symmetrical - informal - un-even



LINES - VERTICAL

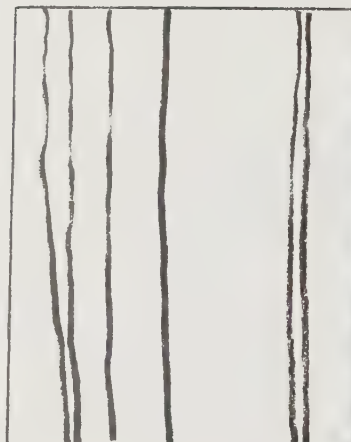
Even line-thickness, even spacing, all over pattern.
The spaces created by the lines are just as important
as the lines themselves! Even line thickness,
un-even spacing, un-symmetrical balance. Vertical
lines are active, like something growing, reaching
up or falling down.



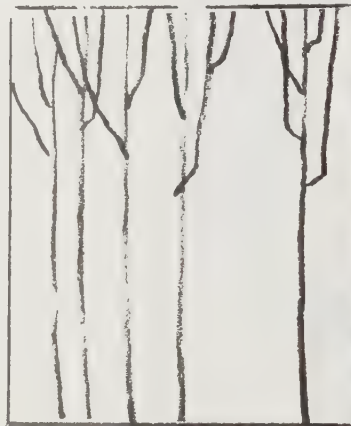
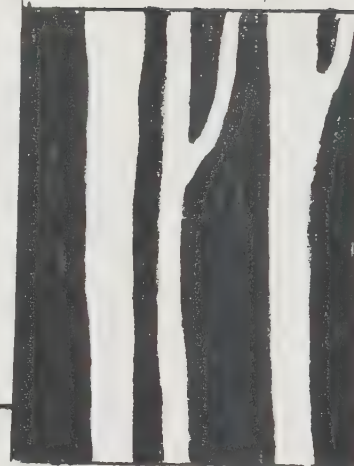
Even line-thickness
Even spacing - All over pattern



The spaces created by the lines
are just as important as the lines
themselves

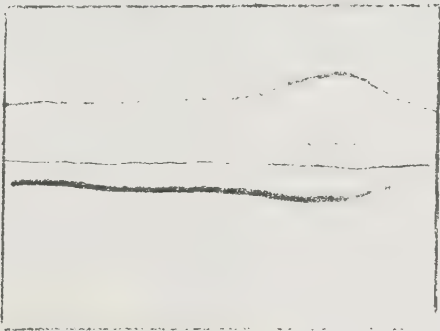
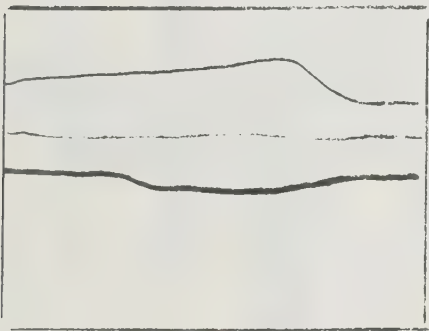
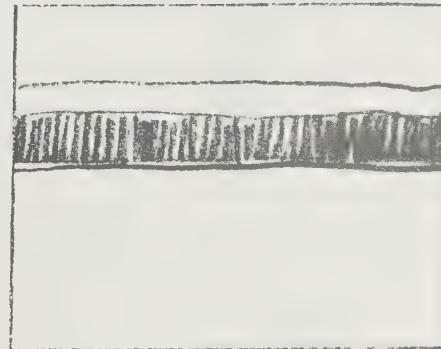
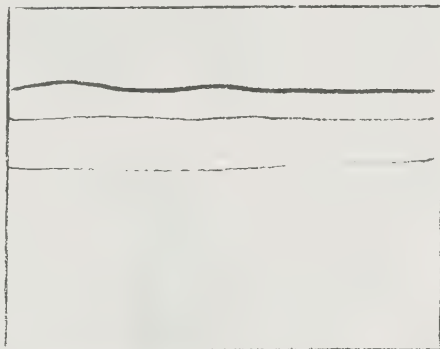
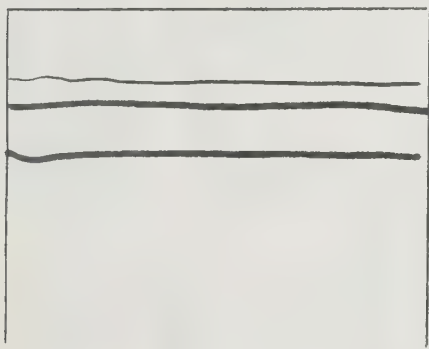


Even line thickness
Un-even spacing -
Un-symmetrical balance

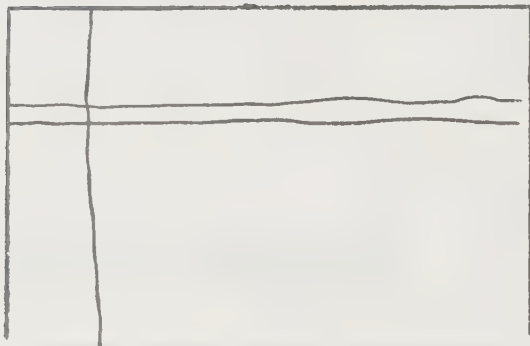


LINES - HORIZONTAL

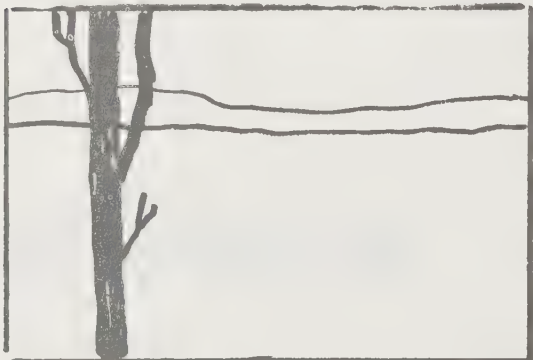
Horizontal lines are passive or quiet; a still evening, a windless afternoon. Curved horizontal lines flow, slight movement like a soft breeze, slowly moving reflections. People relaxing, resting; animals grazing, quiet action.



LINES - VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL



Straight line structure behind a simple landscape - a lake or a field?



Passive
Quiet



Curved and straight lines
Passive - slight movement

More curves -
More action



Passive



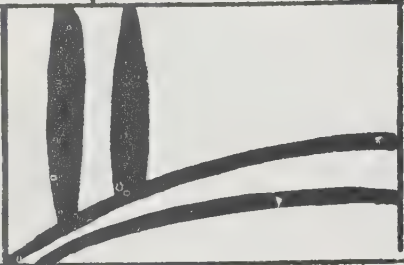
Passive

LINES AND CORNERS

Lines going into corners for no good reason attract the eye and distract from the composition



Corner too strong



Corners hidden with other lines



Corner too strong

Corners too strong



Corners hidden with other lines

Corners hidden with other lines



1. Study carefully the problem which you have selected
2. The message must be clear
3. Intelligent elimination of all non-essential details
4. Make a genuine effort to be original

Art in General -

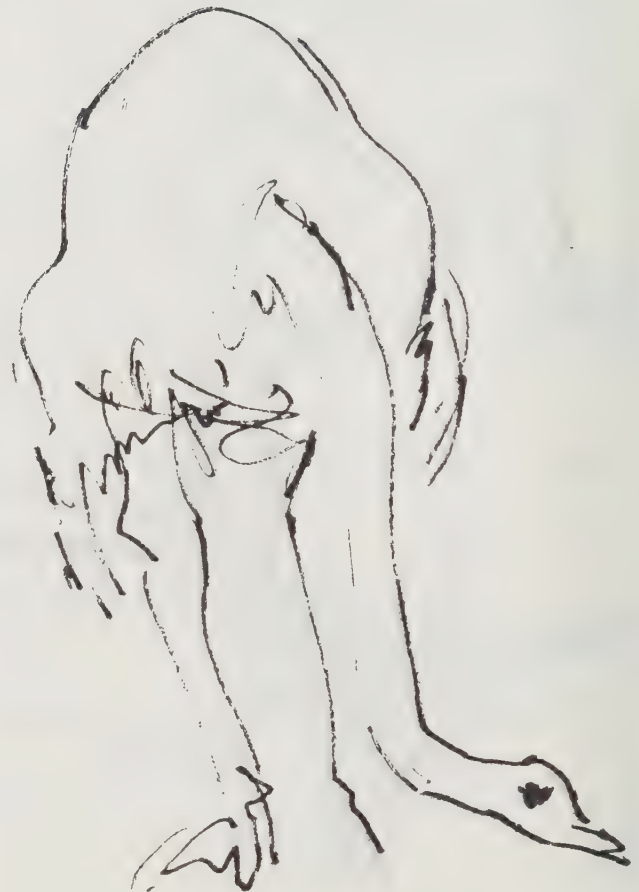
Some will find it difficult to adjust themselves. I can't pump art into you - but I can help you to a better understanding of those things which are regarded as the fundamental necessities of any artist's education.

An artist is beset by two fears: (a) himself (b) other people, so he is no different from anyone else. Why then is he to be an artist or have ambitions to be one?

- (a) He can draw - that implies a co-ordination of eye and mind
- (b) Sensitive to the things he sees and the things he feels
- (c) Express himself about what he sees and feels

It is necessary to learn a new language and the use he makes of that new language is Art, either good or bad.

Movement is always progression from place to place - not necessarily action.





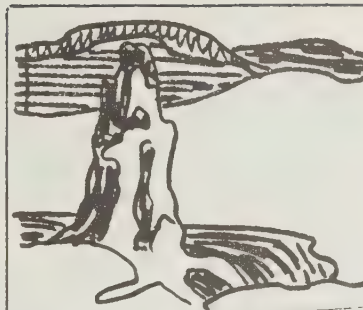


TEXTURE

Texture is complimented by placing it against a plain area. Simple textured area, variety of texture, variety of dark and light plain areas, and variety of textures. Mr. Carmichael used to call them plain and complicated areas. Complicated could mean any kind of texture; scratched, thick, thin, all kinds of dabs, dots, squares, circles, free forms, absolutely anything to create a texture. Added things like paper, sand, gravel, wood chips, all these and more can with imaginative thinking become textures. The texture should work for you, either to reinforce the main structure or compliment its simple shape and place texture behind it.



Simple textured area is complimented by putting it against a plain area



Variety of texture



Variety of dark and light, plain and textured areas



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CONTRAST — light and dark areas



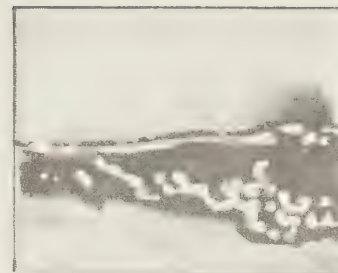
Composition lost
not enough contrast



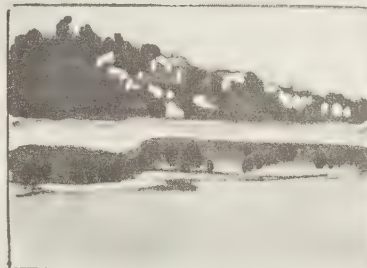
Lights compliment
darks



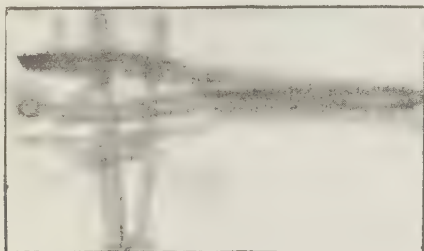
Composition lost
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Lights compliment
darks



Lights compliment
darks

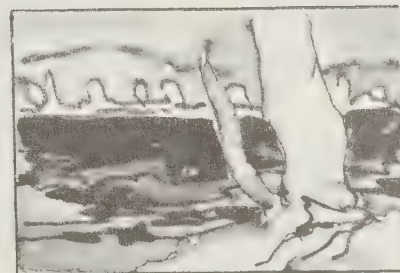
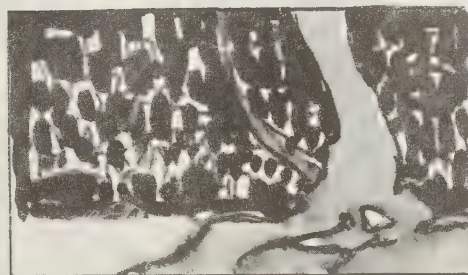
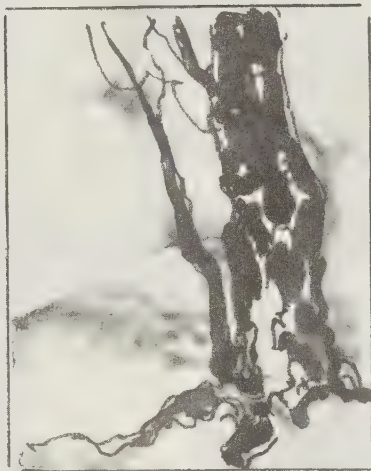


Composition lost
not enough contrast



117. 101KLEAD

CENTRE OF INTEREST — Decide where it is going to be and then reinforce it!





CONTRASTS IN GENERAL

The necessities of a good composition:

Weight — heavy and light

Texture — rough and smooth

Color — strong and weak, dull and bright

Space — large, medium and small

Lines — variety

All these things need to be considered in the "small rough" stage. Sound planning is a MUST. What mood are you trying to create? If outside, is it warm, hot, cold, windy, still and what season?

Still life can also create a mood.

A portrait, what kind of things should be used to tell something about the personality, age and the time of day or night? How can you make the most of the subject, whatever it may be?

Interesting shapes in ordinary places.





CONTRAST IN COLOR

Before we get into the contrast, how about this color bit? So many hints, ideas, theories, experimental mixing and a lot of mud!



Why not a good, sound basic color system to act as a basis, something to hang your hat on? There are several that work; this one has been in use for at least thirty years and is not difficult to learn. The name of it is Munsell.

How many Primary colors are there? This system has five. Start around the clock; red, yellow, green

blue and purple. Mix around the clock; red and yellow make red-yellow or y/r; yellow and green make yellow-green or g/y; green and blue make green-blue or b/g; blue and purple make blue-purple or p/b; purple and red make purple-red or r/p. These are called Secondary colors. Light through a prism mixes to make them all, but paint is a different thing! Look what happens when purple is mixed with red; adjustments need to be made to get the right color, warm red will not make purple. Either settle for alizarin with ultramarine or invest in a purple pigment! These cannot always



come out of a tube or pan, they need to be mixed.

Making a color chart of your own is an excellent method of learning about color. Let's take a minute to list a palette, one that will be as useful as possible without a large investment.

White — titanium is the whitest white, mixes easily and does not separate

Cadmium Yellow — excellent all round yellow

Yellow Ochre — good for golds and greens

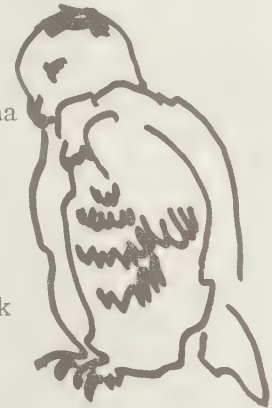
Cadmium Red — warm red

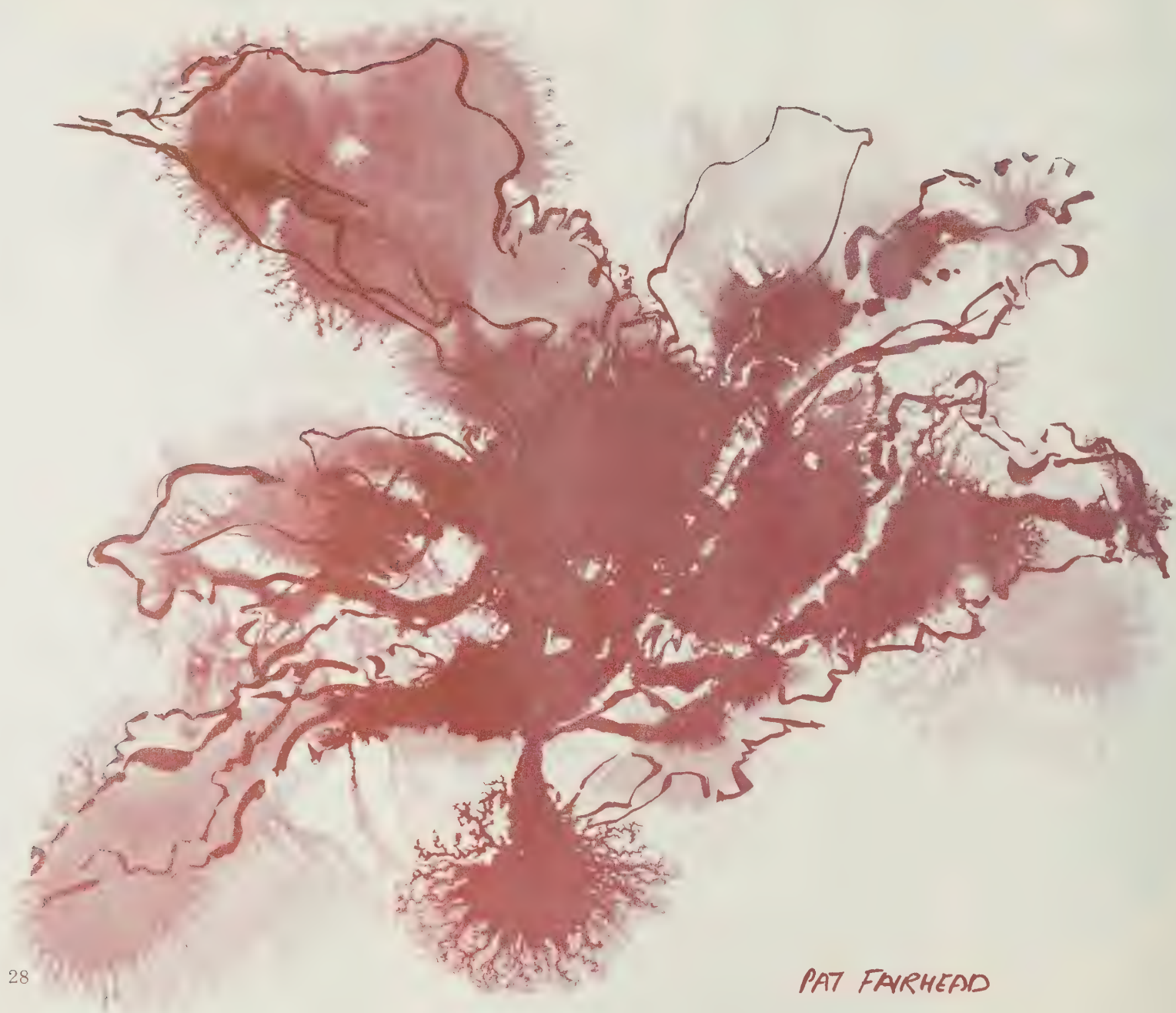
Alizarin Red — cold red

Ultramarine Blue — excellent all round blue, some purples and black when mixed with Burnt Sienna

Cerulean Blue — adjusts to skies and makes some good greens

Burnt Sienna — rich brown to dark brown when blue is added and black





That is a start, find out how these work for you and then add colors you can't mix.

Viridian - all purpose green, adjusts with yellow

Violet

Monastral colors are all very rich pigments and completely permanent. Your color will depend greatly on the quality of paint used. Naturally some look like bargains; one good test is to mix cadmium yellow with cadmium red. If the result is a definite orange then it is good paint. Poor quality paint will not take much mixing and is quite frustrating to work with. Better to have a few tubes of good paint than a box full of poor quality color!

As paint can be a fair investment, a little investigating is a good idea. Most companies make two or more qualities - artist's and student's. The company who uses the same pigment in both qualities only a lesser amount in the student brand is obviously the better buy.

Perhaps you would like to use acrylics. There are three different consistencies and quite a variance in quality. Liquid, soft paste and some as thick as oil paint. They are water soluble and completely

compatible. Acrylics can be applied as thick or as thin as you like. There is no danger of cracking, providing you use top quality paint.

Some brands are slightly opaque and others beautifully transparent ... shop around for the one to fill your needs.

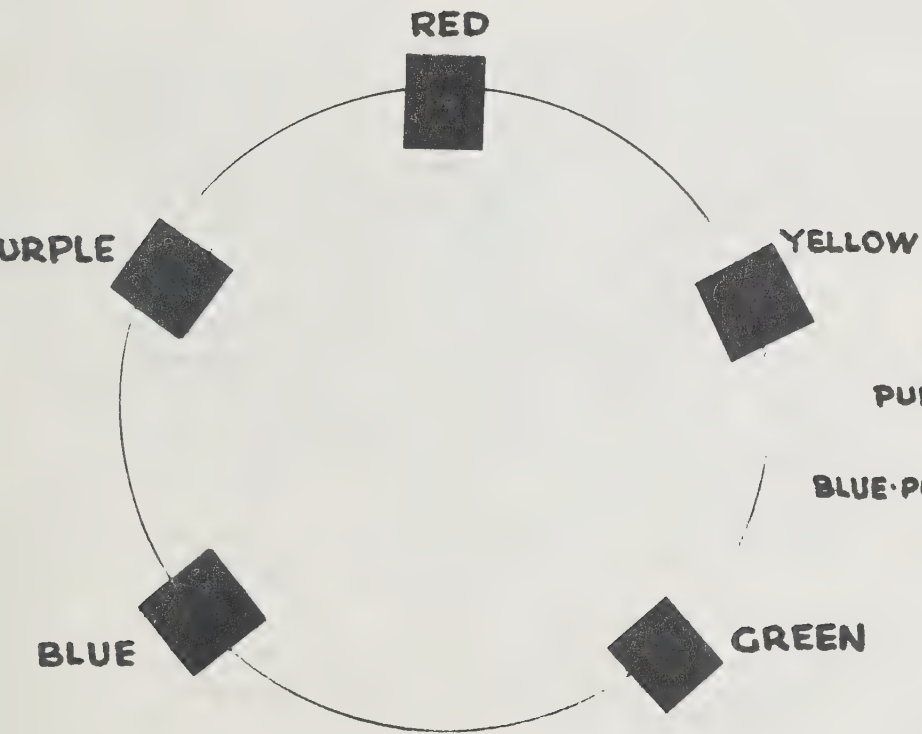




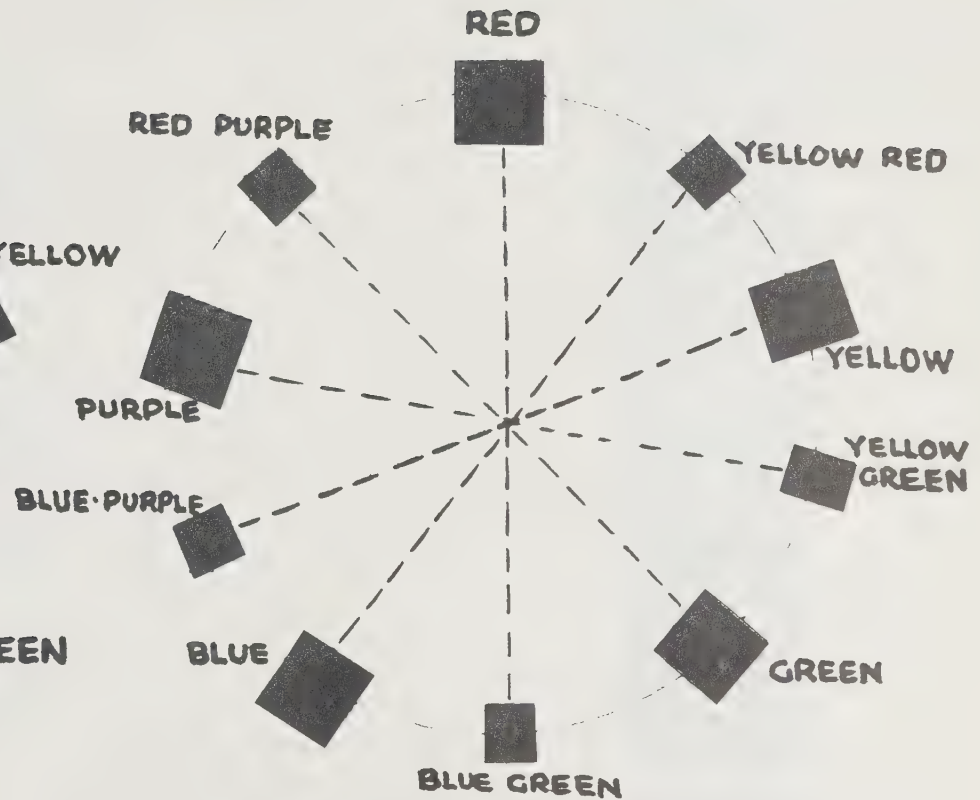




Munsell Color Chart



THE 5 PRIMARY COLORS



5 PRIMARY & 5 SECONDARY COLORS

MUNSELL

The Munsell color system as it relates to an artist.

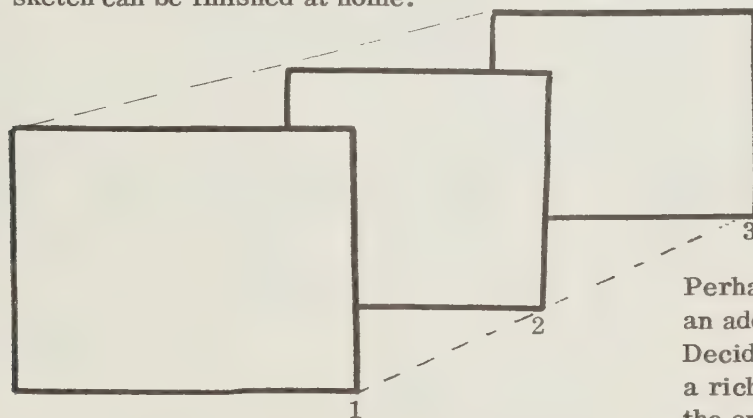
How does it work? Suppose you are painting a still life with several objects including oranges, lemons and apples. You now know how to mix orange. What about the shadow, what color is it? Look at the color wheel, find the opposite or complimentary color, mix a little into the orange. That is the color of the shadow! Shadows are not all browns and blacks, they are Colour. The same with the lemons and apples. Find the complimentary, a quick glance at your wheel and there it is! Use it, and do it until you know what happens. This is the base only. When you are familiar with the mixing process, then experiment. Different pigments make all kinds of interesting combinations.

Next, to simplify the terms of color, Munsell created a color language. Colors are called Hue. When complimentary colors are mixed together the term is Chroma, or the greyness of the Hue.

VALUE AND CHROMA

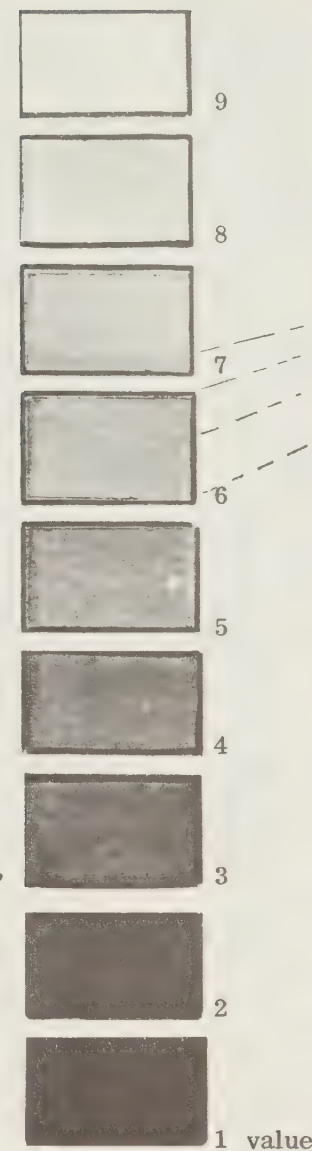
The third term is value. Is the hue light or dark? The naming of colors has been a real problem. Take blues for example. There is cornflower, periwinkle sky, turquoise, baby .. all blues, but what kind? Now with a definite base these fall into categories. Blue, blue-green and blue-purple, high or low value and the amount of greyness which is chroma. Blue at value 5, chroma 6: each color can be named! There are all sorts of advantages to a full knowledge of Munsell. Perhaps you are out sketching and suddenly a storm comes up. A few quick notes on your unfinished canvas, e.g. tree foliage y/r, r and r/p, lake p/b and your sketch can be finished at home.

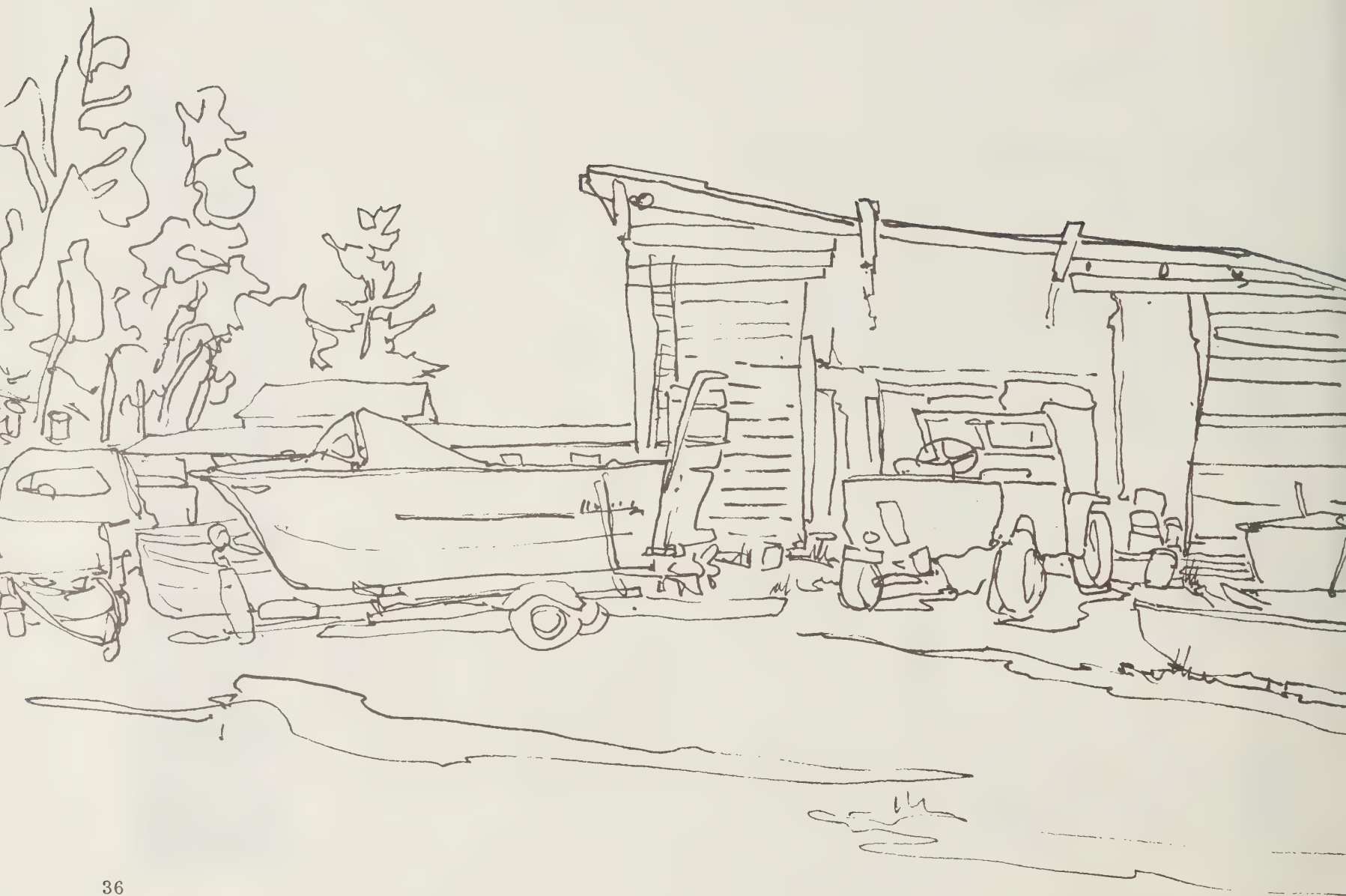
Red

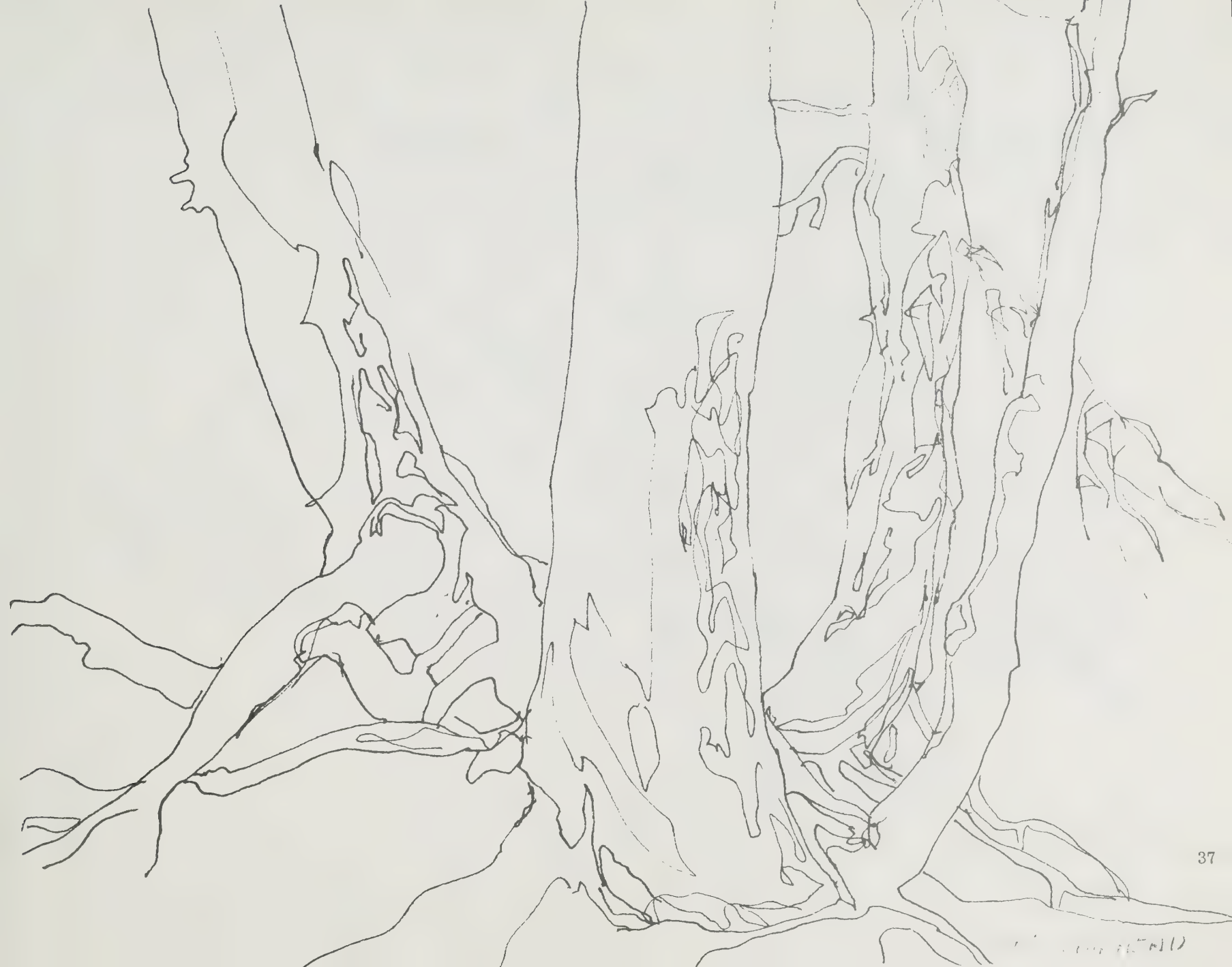


Red is value 5 — when a little b/g is mixed as in 2 and then a little more as in 3, the greying of the colour gives the illusion of 3rd dimension.

Perhaps your still life needs something, an additional touch of colour interest. Decide the predominant colours and add a rich bit of complimentary colour. All the opposites look great together as do the related or analagous colours.









BIBLIOGRAPHY

MUNSELL BOOK OF COLOR,
The Munsell Color Company, Inc.,
10 East Franklin St.,
Baltimore, Maryland.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to:

Mrs. Mary Mastin
Mr. Jim Adamson



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